<u>WHAT IS CLAIMED IS:</u>

1.   A computer configuration modification method comprising:

storing hardware configuration information comprising information regarding hardware configuration of a computer, a hardware contract renewal notification destination for the hardware of the computer, information regarding program configuration of the computer, and a program contract renewal notification destination for the program of the computer;

upon reception of a configuration modification request for the hardware configuration and program configuration of the computer to be modified, transmitting the information regarding the hardware configuration to be modified to the hardware contract renewal notification destination in order to modify the fee to be paid for the modified hardware, and transmitting the information regarding the hardware configuration to be modified and the information regarding the program configuration to be modified to the program contract renewal notification destination in order to modify the fee to be paid for the modified program; and

when license information transmitted from the program contract renewal notification destination is inputted, modifying the hardware configuration based on the information regarding the hardware configuration to be modified and modifying the program configuration based on the information regarding the hardware configuration to be modified and the information regarding the program configuration to be modified.

2.   The computer configuration modification method according to Claim 1, wherein the license information includes a license key, and wherein the hardware configuration and the program configuration of the computer are modified based on the license key.

3.   The computer configuration modification method according to Claim 2, further comprising making a determination as to whether or not to perform the configuration modification based on a period of validity comprised in the license key.

4.   The computer configuration modification method of Claim 2, further comprising:

comparing the hardware configuration with the license key;

4   if the license key contains a permissible hardware amount which is smaller

5   than an actual hardware amount of the hardware configuration, then modifying a hardware

6   amount used by the program of the computer to the permissible hardware amount indicated

7   by the license key; and

8   if the license key contains a permissible hardware amount which is greater

9   than the actual hardware amount of the hardware configuration, then modifying a hardware

10   amount used by the program of the computer to the actual hardware amount of the hardware

11   configuration.

1   5.   The computer configuration modification method according to Claim

2   1, wherein when the configuration modification is performed, the configuration of the

3   program is modified based on the modified hardware configuration.

1   6.   The computer configuration modification method according to Claim

2   1, further comprising:

3   receiving billing information for the modified hardware and the modified

4   program;

5   determining whether or not the hardware configuration and program

6   configuration contained in the transmitted license information match with the modified

7   hardware and modified program corresponding to the received billing information; and

8   if the hardware configuration and program configuration contained in the

9   transmitted license information do not match with the modified hardware and modified

10   program corresponding to the received billing information, then halting the configuration

11   modification of the computer.

1   7.   The computer configuration modification method according to Claim

2   1, wherein the hardware configuration is modified when license information transmitted from

3   the hardware contract renewal notification destination and license information transmitted

4   from the program contact renewal notification destination are inputted.

1   8.   In a computer readable medium containing a computer configuration

2   modification program for modifying configuration of a computer, the computer configuration

3   modification program comprising:

4   code for storing hardware configuration information comprising information

5   regarding hardware configuration of a computer, a hardware contract renewal notification

6   destination for the hardware of the computer, information regarding program configuration of

7   the computer, and a program contract renewal notification destination for the program of the

8   computer;

9   code for, upon reception of a configuration modification request for the

10   hardware configuration and program configuration of the computer to be modified,

11   transmitting the information regarding the hardware configuration to be modified to the

12   hardware contract renewal notification destination in order to modify the fee to be paid for

13   the modified hardware, and transmitting the information regarding the hardware

14   configuration to be modified and the information regarding the program configuration to be

15   modified to the program contract renewal notification destination in order to modify the fee

16   to be paid for the modified program; and

17   code for modifying the hardware configuration based on the information

18   regarding the hardware configuration to be modified and modifying the program

19   configuration based on the information regarding the hardware configuration to be modified

20   and the information regarding the program configuration to be modified, when license

21   information transmitted from the program contract renewal notification destination is

22   inputted.

1   9.   The computer configuration modification program according to Claim

2   8, wherein the code for modifying comprises code for modifying the configuration of the

3   computer based on a license key which is included in the license information.

1   10.   The computer configuration modification program according to Claim

2   9, further comprising code for determining whether or not to perform the configuration

3   modification based on a period of validity comprised in the license key.

1   11.   The computer configuration modification program according to Claim

2   9, further comprising:

3   code for comparing the hardware configuration with the license key;

4   code for modifying a hardware amount used by the program of the computer

5   to the permissible hardware amount indicated by the license key, upon determining that the

6   license key contains a permissible hardware amount which is smaller than an actual hardware

7   amount of the hardware configuration; and

8   code for modifying a hardware amount used by the program of the computer

9   to the actual hardware amount of the hardware configuration, upon determining that the

10   license key contains a permissible hardware amount which is greater than the actual hardware

11   amount of the hardware configuration.

1   12.   The computer configuration modification program according to Claim

2   8, wherein the code for modifying comprises code for modifying the program configuration

3   based on the modified hardware configuration when the configuration modification is

4   performed.

1   13.   The computer configuration modification program according to Claim

2   8, further comprising

3   code for determining whether or not the hardware configuration and program

4   configuration contained in the transmitted license information match with the modified

5   hardware and modified program corresponding to billing information for the configuration

6   modification; and

7   code for halting the configuration modification of the computer, upon

8   determining that the hardware configuration and program configuration contained in the

9   transmitted license information do not match with the modified hardware and modified

10   program corresponding to the received billing information.

1   14.   A computer configuration modification device comprising:

2   a memory configured to store hardware configuration information comprising

3   information regarding hardware configuration of a computer, a hardware contract renewal

4   notification destination for the hardware of the computer, information regarding program

5   configuration of the computer, and a program contract renewal notification destination for the

6   program of the computer;

7   means, upon reception of a configuration modification request for the

8   hardware configuration and program configuration of the computer to be modified, for

9   transmitting the information regarding the hardware configuration to be modified to the

10   hardware contract renewal notification destination in order to modify the fee to be paid for

11   the modified hardware, and transmitting the information regarding the hardware

12   configuration to be modified and the information regarding the program configuration to be

13   modified to the program contract renewal notification destination in order to modify the fee

14   to be paid for the modified program; and

15   means, when license information transmitted from the program contract

16   renewal notification destination is inputted, for modifying the hardware configuration based

17   on the information regarding the hardware configuration to be modified and modifying the

18   program configuration based on the information regarding the hardware configuration to be

19   modified and the information regarding the program configuration to be modified.

1   15.   The computer configuration modification device according to Claim

2   14, further comprising means for modifying the configuration of the computer based on a

3   license key which is included in the license information.

1   16.   The computer configuration modification device according to Claim

2   15, wherein the license key includes a period of validity for modifying the configuration of

3   the computer.

1   17.   The computer configuration modification device according to Claim

2   15, further comprising:

3   means, if the license key contains a permissible hardware amount which is

4   smaller than an actual hardware amount of the hardware configuration, for modifying a

5   hardware amount used by the program of the computer to the permissible hardware amount

6   indicated by the license key, and if the license key contains a permissible hardware amount

7   which is greater than the actual hardware amount of the hardware configuration, for

8   modifying a hardware amount used by the program of the computer to the actual hardware

9   amount of the hardware configuration.

1   18.   The computer configuration modification device according to Claim

2   14, further comprising:

3   means for determining whether or not the hardware configuration and program

4   configuration contained in the transmitted license information match with the modified

5   hardware and modified program corresponding to billing information for the modified

6   hardware and modified program; and

7   means, if the hardware configuration and program configuration contained in

8   the transmitted license information do not match with the modified hardware and modified

9   program corresponding to the received billing information, for halting the configuration

10   modification of the computer.

1   19.   A computer configuration modification system comprising:

2   a computer having a modifiable configuration;

3   a hardware management system configured to perform billing in accordance

4   with hardware configuration of the computer; and

5   a program management system configured to perform billing in accordance

6   with the program configuration of the computer;

7   wherein the computer is configured, when a configuration modification

8   request for the hardware configuration and program configuration of the computer is

9   inputted, to transmit to the hardware management system information regarding the hardware

10   configuration to be modified in order to modify the fee to be paid for the hardware following

11   configuration modification, and to transmit to the program management system information

12   regarding the program configuration to be modified together with the information regarding

13   the hardware configuration to be modified in order to modify the fee to be paid for the

14   program following configuration modification;

15   wherein the hardware management system is configured, when the

16   information regarding the hardware configuration to be modified is inputted, to modify the

17   fee to be paid for the hardware based on the hardware configuration information and to

18   transmit hardware billing information to the computer;

19   wherein the program management system is configured, when the information

20   regarding the hardware configuration to be modified and the information regarding the

21   program configuration to be modified is inputted, to modify the fee to be paid for the

22   program based on the hardware configuration information and program configuration

23   information and to transmit program billing information to the computer; and

24   wherein the computer is configured, when the hardware billing information

25   and the program billing information are inputted, to modify the hardware configuration based

26   on the information regarding the hardware configuration to be modified and to modify the

27   program configuration based on the information regarding the program configuration to be

28   modified.

1   20.   The computer configuration modification system according to Claim

2   19, wherein the hardware configuration and the program configuration of the computer are

3   modified based on a license key generated by the program management system.

1   21.   The computer configuration modification system according to Claim

2   20, wherein the license key includes a period of validity for modifying the configuration of

3   the computer.

1   22.   The computer configuration modification system according to Claim
2   20, wherein the license key contains permissible hardware configuration and permissible
3   program configuration, and wherein the computer is configured not to modify the hardware
4   configuration and the program configuration if the hardware configuration and the program
5   configuration corresponding to the billing information do not match the permissible hardware
6   configuration and the permissible program configuration contained in the license key.

1   23.   The computer configuration modification system according to Claim
2   19, wherein the computer is configured to modify the program configuration based on the
3   modified hardware configuration.